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RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 8788
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 4705
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 3380

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 000444

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STATE FOR EEB/TPP/ABT/BTT/JOHN FINN AND GARY CLEMENTS
USDA FOR FAS/OSTA/ANDREW RUDE AND CALEB OKRAY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [KPAO](#) [TBIO](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN: FY 2008 BIOTECH OUTREACH STRATEGY AND FUNDING
REQUEST

REF: 07 STATE 160639

¶1. Summary: Despite playing a critical role in the original Green Revolution, Pakistan has lagged behind neighbors India and China in the development and utilization of modern agricultural biotechnology. In response, the Government of Pakistan (GOP) is looking to make the leap to join the "Gene Revolution," by incorporating commercial biotechnology into the country's agriculture. In response, Embassy Islamabad has outlined biotechnology outreach goals for the coming year. Embassy Islamabad requests funding in the amount of USD 58,000 for two proposals: a Biotechnology Science Fellow and a Pakistan Biotechnology Conference. End Summary.

¶2. The lack of intellectual property protection for seed breeders represents the biggest obstacle to the adoption of legal biotech seeds for major crops, including cotton. Without adequate IPR protection, multinational agricultural biotechnology companies are unwilling to partner with Pakistan's biotech research centers to develop genetically engineered (GE) crops.

¶3. Pakistan freely imports certain bioengineered products, including soybeans, soybean meal and soybean oil. While there are no legally planted biotech crops in Pakistan, at least 40 percent of all domestic cotton is genetically engineered. The modified seed, developed for crop conditions in China, India and Australia, has performed poorly in the face of mealy bugs and cotton curly leaf virus.

¶4. Current biotech crops under development in Pakistan include cotton, wheat, rice, sugarcane, canola (rapeseed), tomatoes, potatoes, chilies, peppers and melons. Research centers are looking to engineer crops that are virus and insect resistant, tolerant to increased soil salinity and able to survive in drought and extreme heat.

¶5. Embassy Islamabad's biotechnology outreach goals for FY 2008 are:

--Assist the GOP through the U.S.-Pakistan Science and Technology Agreement in the implementation of the GOP's proposed "Green-to-Gene" Initiative.

--Support the promulgation of sensible IPR legislation to protect seed patents to allow collaboration between international plant breeders and Pakistan's biotechnology research centers. Post is also working actively on data protection for life sciences and pharmaceutical companies test data.

--Promote scientific exchanges in the area of plant and animal

genomics through the USDA endowments at the Pakistan Agricultural Research Center and agricultural universities nation-wide.

--Utilize the International Visitors Leadership Program to send Pakistani opinion leaders to the United States on a biotech-focused tour.

--Utilize the Foreign Press Center to organize a Biotech Reporting Tour for Pakistani media.

--Locate a Biotech Science Fellow for a 3-month sabbatical in Islamabad to work with Pakistani policymakers, opinion leaders, scientists and educators to identify ways forward for the adoption of genetically modified crops.

--Co-sponsor a Biotechnology Workshop to address the major issues impeding the development of agricultural biotechnology in Pakistan.

16. Embassy Islamabad requests additional funds for two projects:

--Embassy Islamabad would like to invite a Biotech Science Fellow for a 3 month sabbatical in Islamabad. Embassy Islamabad would look to the Science Fellow to provide leadership in identifying barriers to the promulgation of biotechnology regulations and to identify areas of scientific collaboration and potential research partnerships between Pakistani and U.S. scientists. The Fellow would also engage in public outreach activities with students, policy makers, opinion leaders and the media to promote the science of genetic engineering.

The Biotechnology Science Fellow would assist the GOP in removing barriers to the passage of biotechnology regulations and foster

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U.S.-Pakistan collaboration in seed development. The Fellow would work with the Embassy's Public Affairs Section to promote a positive image of biotech crops and explain how biotechnology can help Pakistan in meeting food security requirements.

Proposed Length: 3 months

Estimated cost: USD 51,000

Target audience: Pakistan's policy makers, opinion leaders, scientists, students and the media.

--Embassy Islamabad also seeks additional funding for a 2-day Biotechnology Conference and Workshop. U.S. speakers would include the Biotechnology Science Fellow and one additional U.S. biotechnology researcher. Most papers presented would be from Pakistani biotechnology leaders in the field of research, policy and education. The conference would focus on the implementation of Pakistan's "Green to Gene" initiative, the current status of Pakistani biotechnology research, food security, biofuel development and potential areas for U.S.- Pakistan scientific collaboration. A conference report would be published following the workshop.

Proposed Length: 2 days

Estimated Cost: USD 18,000 (Including the cost for U.S. participant: USD 15,000 for two weeks; conference room: USD 2,000; publication: USD 1,000)

Target audience: Pakistan's policy makers, opinion leaders, scientists and media.

17. All project inquiries can be addressed to Alex Whittington, Economic Officer, whittingtonae@state.gov, tel: 92.51.208.2667.

PATTERSON